



*RI Department of Education
in Collaboration with the
RI Department of Health*

Alcohol and Other Drug Use Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students 1997 and 2001

This summary presents selected information on alcohol and other drug use behaviors that affect health risks among Rhode Island adolescents, based on results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in over 50 participating states, territories, and municipalities nationwide. The YRBS was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 and 2001 the YRBS was administered to 1,528 and 1,396 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students, respectively, in grades 9 through 12. With response rates of 60% in 1997 and 63% in 2001, the results are representative of all public high school students statewide. Survey findings from both years can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors within this population.

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KEY FINDINGS

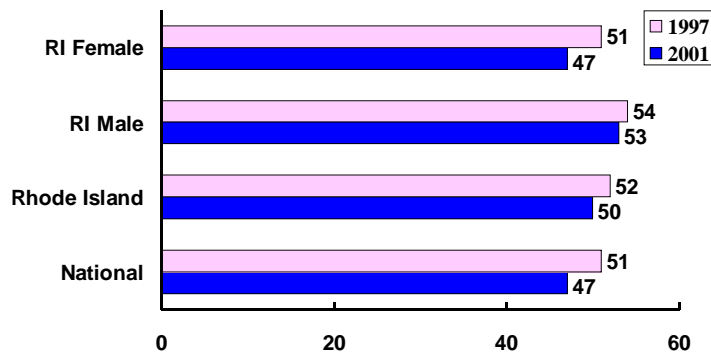
- ✓ About half of Rhode Island high school students in both 1997 and 2001 had at least one drink of alcohol in the month prior to the survey. These findings were similar to national data. Also, nearly a third of the State's students had five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past month. Males appeared more likely than females to drink and to drink heavily. Older students drank heavily at a greater rate than did younger students
 - ✓ Unlike 1997, more students in 2001 used marijuana (33%) than smoked cigarettes (25%) in the past month. Marijuana use increased slightly from 29% in 1997, and Rhode Island remained above the national rate. Males were more likely than females and twelfth graders much more likely than younger students to use marijuana.
 - ✓ In 2001, 6% of students used cocaine in the past month, which was slightly higher than the national rate as well as the 1997 Rhode Island rate. A greater proportion of males used cocaine than did females.
 - ✓ 12% of students in 2001 had used inhalants during their life, declining substantially from 21% in 1997. Only 5% used inhalants in the past 30 days in 2001, which was comparable to national data.
 - ✓ 9% of students in 2001 had used methamphetamines in their lifetime, which was slightly below the national average. In comparison, just 4% had used heroin during their life, which was slightly above the national rate.
 - ✓ Just under one-third (30%) of Rhode Island students in 2001 had their first drink of alcohol before age 13. This was slightly lower than in 1997. In contrast, just over one-tenth of students smoked marijuana and nearly one-quarter of students smoked cigarettes before age 13 in 2001 and 1997.
 - ✓ Lifetime use was substantially higher in 2001 for alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana than for inhalants and cocaine. Comparing 2001 with 1997 data, lifetime use declined for cigarettes and inhalants, remained similar for alcohol and marijuana, and increased somewhat for cocaine.
 - ✓ A relatively small proportion of students in 2001 reported using alcohol (8%), marijuana (11%), or cigarettes (14%) on school property. However, almost a third of all students, especially males, had someone offer, sell, or give them an illegal drug on school property in the past year. Rates have changed little since 1997, and Rhode Island figures were similar to national data.
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Alcohol and Other Drug Use

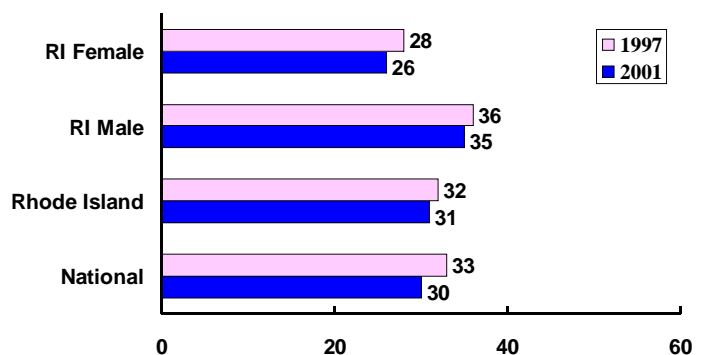
Risk Behavior: Alcohol Use

Rationale: Approximately 30% of all motor vehicle crashes that result in injury involve alcohol, and motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among youth aged 15-19 in the United States. Heavy drinking among youth also has been linked to increased number of sexual partners, use of marijuana, and poor academic performance.

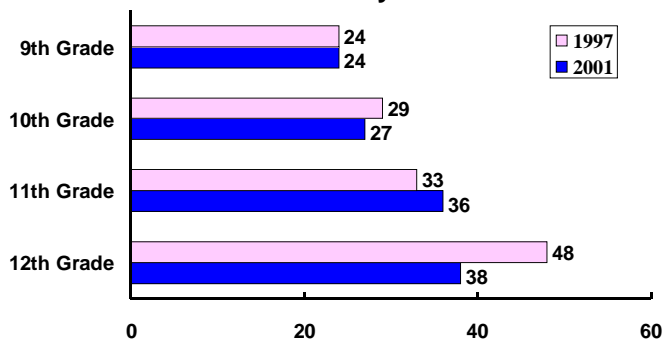
Percentage of students who had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey



Percentage of students who had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours, on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey



Percentage of Rhode Island students who had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours, on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey

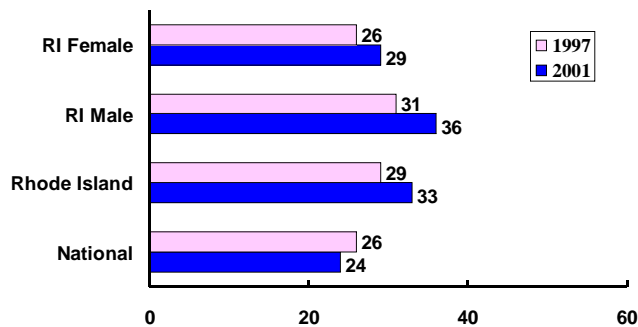


Alcohol and Other Drug Use

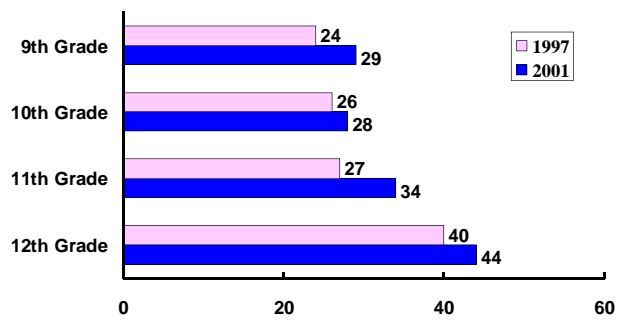
Risk Behavior: Other Drug Use

Rationale: In addition to morbidity and mortality due to injury, drug use is related to suicide, early unwanted pregnancy, school failure, delinquency, and transmissions of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Despite improvements in recent years, drug use is greater among youth in the U.S. than has been documented in any other industrialized nation in the world.

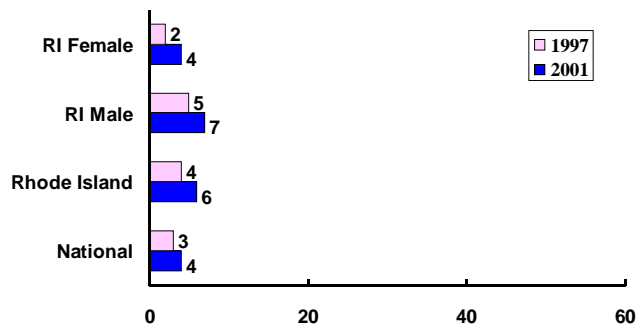
Percentage of students who used marijuana one or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey



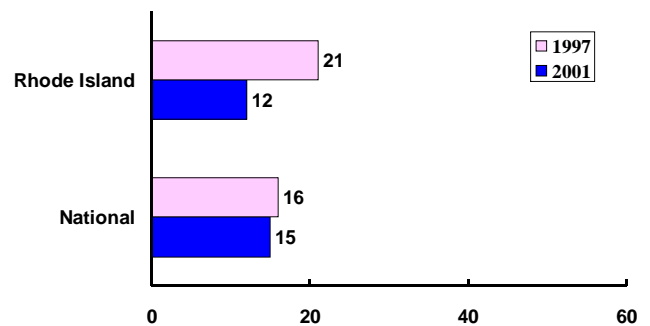
Percentage of Rhode Island students who used marijuana one or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey



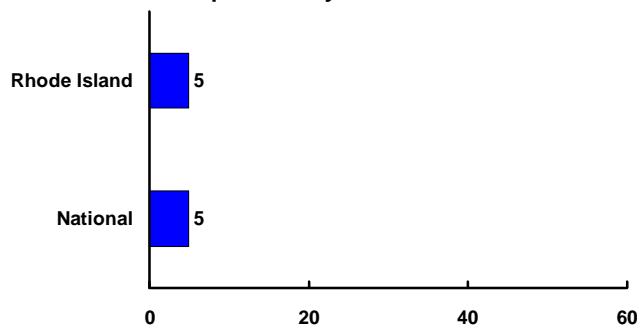
Percentage of students who used any form of cocaine including powder, crack or freebase one or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey



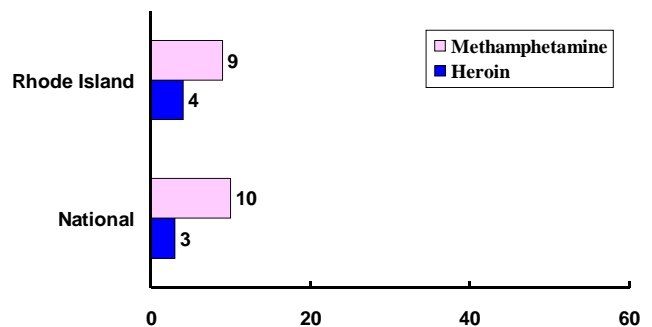
Percentage of students who sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paint or spray to get high at any time during their life



Percentage of students who sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high one or more times during the past 30 days – 2001 YRBS



Percentage of students who used heroin or methamphetamines one or more times during their lives – 2001 YRBS

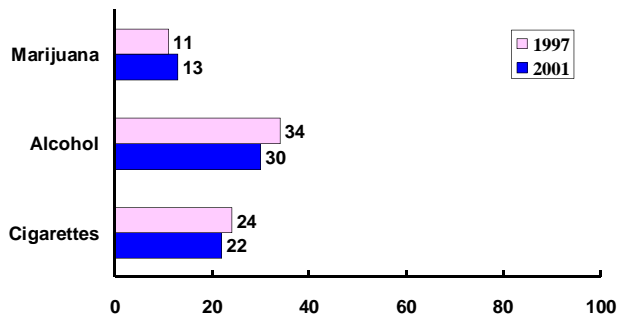


Alcohol and Other Drug Use

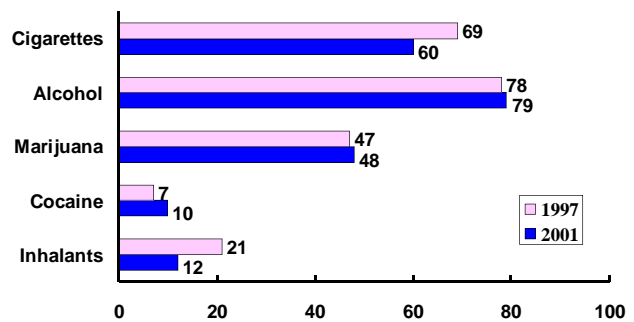
Risk Behavior: Age of initiation, life time use, and use on school property

Drugs, Alcohol and Crime: There were over 900 juvenile arrests and referrals to Rhode Island Family Court in 2002 for drug and alcohol related offenses. This represented 10% of all the referrals to Family Court that year for juvenile wayward/delinquent offenses. In addition, over half (55%) of the incarcerated population at the Training School was receiving substance abuse treatment in December 2002. (Source: 2003 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook)

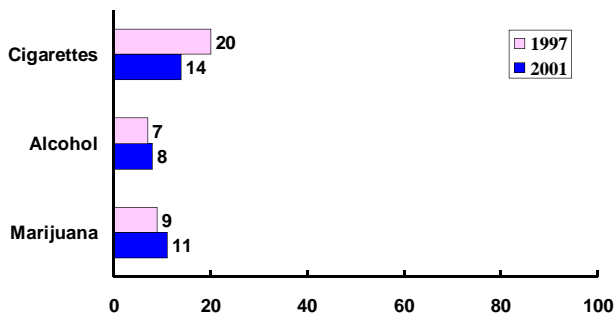
Percentage of Rhode Island students who used the following substances for the first time before age 13



Percentage of Rhode Island students who used the following substances one or more times in their lifetime



Percentage of Rhode Island students who used the following substances on school property one or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey



Percentage of students who had someone offer, sell, or give them an illegal drug on school property during the 12 months preceding the survey

